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Geraci

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COMMISSION TO REPORT UPON THE ASSASSINATION

OF

PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY

P R O C E E D I N G S

Room 415-B, Old Civil Courts Building

Royal and Conti Streets

New Orleans, Louisiana

April 7-8, 1964

Testimony of

PHILIP GERACI, III

DIETRICH & WITT, Inc.
- STENOTYPISTS -
National Bank of Commerce Bldg.
New Orleans

Deposition of PHILIP GERACI III

taken April 7, 1964

Page 13 Line 21 - After the sentence "You don't have to" insert "You can give it to Carlos".

Page 21 Line 5 - Delete the word "the" and insert the word "a".

Page 21 - Line 6 - Delete "him" and substitute "Carlos".

4/22

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P R O C E E D I N G S

Room 415-B, Old Civil Courts Building

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April 7-8, 1964

THERE WERE PRESENT:

WESLEY J. LIEBELER, Esq.,
Staff Counsel;

MRS. HELEN R. DIETRICH,
Reporter.

(Reporter's Note: The witness, Philip Geraci, was accompanied into the Hearing Room by his mother.)

PHILIP GERACI,

having been first duly sworn, was examined and testified as follows:

BY MR. LIEBELER:

Q. My name is Wesley J. Liebeler. I am a member of the legal staff of the President's Commission investigating the assassination of President Kennedy. Staff members have been authorized to take the testimony of witnesses by the Commission pursuant to authority granted to the Commission by Executive Order No. 11130, dated November 29, 1963, and Joint Resolution of Congress No. 137.

I understand that Mr. Lee Rankin wrote you a letter last week in which he told you that ~~he~~ I would ~~be in~~ contact ~~with~~ you, did he not?

A. A letter? No.

Q. You did not receive a letter from Mr. Rankin?

MRS. GERACI: Would you please give us one. We would like to have it to keep.

A. Somebody said they sent one.

Q. You didn't receive it?

A. No.

MRS. GERACI: We did not receive it.

Q. Now I think in point of fact that is right. I think that the decision to take your testimony was made subsequent to the time that the letters were sent out to other witnesses. Now you are --

MRS. GERACI: May I make a statement before we go any further?

MR. LIEBELER: Let the record indicate that Mrs. Geraci is in the Hearing Room at her request to assist her son and give moral support.

MRS. GERACI: And we want no publicity at all, please.

MR. LIEBELER: We have already given to the reporters the names of some of the witnesses who came in, but we have already been advised that you did not want any publicity at this point, and we did not give your name to the newspaper reporter or make any statement about Philip's appearance here.

THE WITNESS: Does that mean I can't tell anyone about it?

MR. LIEBELER: That is something you can settle among yourselves.

THE WITNESS: I told everybody I went to a doctor's appointment this evening.

Q. (Handing documents to witness) Now I want to give you a copy of the Joint Resolution of Congress and of

the Executive Order that I have just referred to, and also of the Rules of Practice adopted by the Commission concerning the taking of testimony of witnesses. Those rules provide that technically you are entitled to three days notice before you appear to have your testimony taken, but you are entitled to waive that notice, and I assume that, since you are here, you would be willing to waive it with regard to the testimony. Is that right, Philip?

A. I don't know.

MRS. GERACI: Yes. Well, they did not notify us three days ahead of time, but that is all right. We are here. They called yesterday.

MR. LIEBELER: You have indicated that you are willing to go ahead with the testimony instead of waiting for the three days notice?

(Mrs. Geraci nodded assent.)

Q. Philip, would you state your full name for the record, please.

A. Philip Geraci, the Third.

Q. What is your address?

A. 2201 Green Acres Road.

Q. New Orleans?

A. Metairie.

Q. When were you born?

A. February 21, 1948.

Q. So you are now about 16 years old or 17 years old?

A. Yes. Well, I am 16.

Q. Do you go to school?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Where?

A. East Jefferson High School.

Q. And you are -- what? -- a junior there now, or a senior?

A. No, sophomore, 10th grade.

Q. Tenth grade. Do you know a man by the name of Carlos Bringuier?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. When did you first meet him?

A. Well, this was summer, last summer, some place around the beginning of it, and -- you want me to tell you everything about it?

Q. Yes.

A. Well, I was down there with a friend. (Addressing mother) Do you think I should give his name?

(Mrs. Geraci nodded assent.)

Q. Please do. You were down where?

A. Down there in New Orleans, I mean on Canal Street. We had to go to some radio shop. It was Bill Dwyer. That is a friend. And we were down there and we wanted to go

in radio shops and everything, so I saw -- going down there I saw, looking to the side, that they had a sign saying "Casa Roca," and I took Spanish in school, so I was interested, and I went in there and -- well, he was a little reluctant, but we went anyway.

Q. Your friend was a little reluctant?

A. Yes, a little bit. He didn't get mixed up in this or anything. And then, well, when we were in there, we looked around a little at everything, then I asked the man there -- I didn't know it was Carlos Bringuier then -- I asked him was he a Cuban. He said yes, he was an exile, and everything, you know. I asked him a few things, I guess -- I don't know exactly what -- you know, just a little conversation like. Then I ask him was there anything that I as an American could do. He said, Well, he didn't know, to come back later. You know, he acted as though maybe -- like -- just like he just didn't want me to help or something like that, I guess, so we left and went home, and that was it.

Q. And when did you see him again, if you did? You did see him again, didn't you?

A. Yes.

Q. When?

A. I don't remember when. I remember I saw him a few times, I couldn't exactly say how many, but I went back another time when I was in town, I stopped off and saw him, and

I saw him another time. Then I think it was about the fourth time that I was there that I saw Lee Harvey Oswald.

Q. Now before we get to that, did you ever raise any money for Carlos' activities?

A. Not until the third time.

Q. What happened?

A. No. Wait. Come to think of it, I think it was about the fifth time that I saw Oswald, something like that. I remember I went back -- it was about the third time -- after asking him -- I asked him, "Do you think it is possible to raise donations?" And he said, "Well, yes, it is possible, and he showed me these little yellow slips, sort of like yellow, and they were like receipts if you paid, and he said I could get them -- you know -- if I wanted to, I could, you know, go, and he could give them to me, and go and get donations and give the people this receipt and bring the money back to him.

Q. So did you take some of the receipts?

A. Yes.

Q. And did you get some money?

A. Yes.

Q. And you gave it to Carlos?

A. Yes. It was about $10.00.

Q. And you turned that money over to him?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Now is it correct that on the day ~~or one of the days~~ that you came into the Casa Roca to give this money to Carlos, ~~was that the time~~ that you met Lee Oswald?

A. I don't know if I turned in the money or not. No, I don't think I turned in money, but I couldn't be sure. I remember I went there, and that is the time the last guy, Vance Blalock, came along with me. It was his first time and everything. And we went in there -- I might have turned it in, I am not too sure. Maybe I did, maybe I didn't. I can't remember too much, but I was in there anyway talking to him and that is when I met him.

Q. That is when you met Oswald?

A. Yes. You want me to tell all that?

Q. Yes, tell me all the circumstances of how Oswald --

A. Everything I know?

Q. -- met you and everything you know about it, what the conversation was, who was there.

A. Well, we were -- Vance and me went in there, Vance and I, we went into there, I introduced Vance to Carlos, and Carlos started talking to him about, you know, freedom and all that, democracy and everything. Then later on while we were talking, Lee Oswald came in, you know, while we were talking, and he came in a little while later. He was by himself and he seemed a little nervous. I remember he was

1 dressed just like in that picture there shows (indicating
2 photograph).
3 Q. You are referring to a picture here on the
4 table?
5 A. Yes, sir. Well, he was dressed something
6 like that.
7 Q. -- which has previously been marked as
8 Exhibit 1 to the affidavit of Jesse J. Garner. I show you
9 that picture (exhibiting photograph to witness). You say
10 Lee was dressed something like that when you met him?
11 A. Yes. You know, he had on a tie and a shirt,
12 short sleeved shirt, and sort of like dress pants. I don't
13 know the color of them, but they were sort of like dress
14 pants, just about as much as this (indicating photograph).
15 Q. Do you recognize that individual in the
16 picture as being the man that you saw in the store that day?
17 A. Well, tell you the truth, when I first heard
18 about it in the papers and on the TV, I didn't recognize him.
19 See, I forgot that I met this guy over there, you know, I
20 forgot about it, and I thought I didn't meet him. It wasn't
21 until the F.B.I. man came to my house and he showed me a
22 picture of him when he was first under arrest, and he got
23 arrested in August, the 4th I think.
24 Q. He showed you a picture that had been taken
25 of Lee when he had been under arrest here in New Orleans?

A. Yes. It was one of those things with three things, showing him from the front, the side, and his face.

Q. Did you then recognize the man in the picture that they showed you as being the man that you met in the store that day?

A. Well, you see, I didn't exactly recognize him maybe, but anyway I was pretty sure it was him though. He said -- he showed me that and said, "Do you ever remember an ex-Marine -- and then I remembered there was a guy who was dressed something like that who was an ex-Marine who came in, and he did have a funny name, you know, like Lee. It's a little unusual, it's kind of rare, and I remembered the last name was a little hard, so it just fits that that was him.

Q. Now what kind of conversations did you have with this fellow or what did you talk about?

A. Well, first --

Q. As I understand it now, there were this Marine, Lee Oswald, and Carlos, and Vance Blalock and yourself. Is that right?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Was there anybody else there?

A. Well, while we were talking, this man came up. He was in a big truck, some big truck. I never looked at it closely. He came up and stopped, and the man rushed

in, and he was wearing -- well, he was wearing one of these -- like a cap like you see them wearing over in England. I don't know what kind it is, but anyway it is the kind that truck drivers wear, I guess, and he looked kind of Spanish. Maybe he was a Cuban exile. He was kind of fat, and he came in and showed Carlos this broken radio that he had, so Carlos left and he started fixing the radio and left us to talk to ourselves, Lee and me and my friend. Well, he is the only other person I know that came in. I don't know if he knew what was going on.

Q. Now tell us the conversation that you and Lee and Vance and Carlos had, the best you can recall it.

A. Well, Carlos and me and Vance were kind of talking among ourselves, and he came in and said, "Excuse me," and, you know, he acted a little nervous and things like that. He asked, "Is this the Cuban Headquarters, Cuban Exile Headquarters?" And, "Are you a Cuban exile?" You know, the way I acted when I first went in there. Just asked him a few questions, was he a Cuban exile, and Carlos said yes. He asked him some questions like was he connected with the Cosa Nostra, La Cosi Nostra.

Q. Who asked that?

A. Oswald, he asked that.

Q. Of Carlos?

A. Yes, and Carlos said no, he wasn't. Oswald

then asked where was his headquarters -- in Miami? -- and Carlos said yes, and he said -- let's see -- and then Oswald asked, said something like, "It is kind of exciting meeting someone" -- I don't know if he said exciting -- but he expressed something like that. He said, you know, he expressed wonder or something like that at meeting somebody who was a real Cuban exile, you know, someone who is really trying to do something to help free Cuba and all that. He didn't really say much. In the papers they said he tried to join and all that. That must have been later, because this was --

Q. He didn't do that when you were there?

A. No. This was his first visit. As far as I can make out, it must have been, and he asked a few questions like that. Carlos just answered real simply and all that, he didn't go into any big speeches, you know, with them, like he did for me and Vance, just answered his questions simply. Then when the man came in with the broken radio, Carlos left, and that left Oswald, me, and Vance by ourselves.

Then, well, we asked -- you know, we were a little interested in guerrilla warfare ourselves and things like that, and he said, Well, he was an ex-Marine, said he was in the Marines once. He said he learned a little bit about that stuff, and he said a few things about guerrilla warfare I remember, like he said the way to derail a train

was to wrap chain around the ties of the track and then lock it with a padlock and the train would derail. He said the thing he liked best of all was learning how to blow up the Huey P. Long Bridge. He said you put explosive at each end on the banks and blow it up, and that leaves the one column standing. And he said how to make a homemade gun and how to make gunpowder, homemade gunpowder. He just went into those real simply. He didn't really, you know, tell us how to do it or anything, just said like if you want to make a homemade gun, you know, do something like -- you know, the thing you pull back (demonstrating) and it goes forward, like on one of the pinball machines. He just said something like that. He didn't really go into detail or anything. We didn't ask him.

And by this time Carlos came back from the other guy, and came back, and he was listening, and, well, that is about all.

Oh, there was one important thing. Oswald said something like that he had a military manual from when he was in the Marines, and he said he would give it to me, and I said, "That is all right. You don't have to. You can give it to Carlos." He said, "Well, O.K., he will give it to Carlos next time he comes."

And after that -- well, everybody left. That is as far as I can make out.

Q. Do you remember --

A. -- and he said he was going to come back later and give Carlos this military manual from when he was in the Marines.

Q. And was he going to give this to Carlos for Carlos's benefit, or was he --

A. For Carlos's benefit, I guess, Carlos's or the Cuban exiles'.

Q. Did you hear any conversation about training guerrillas to oppose Castro?

A. No. He didn't say anything about being an expert rifle shooter, never said anything about going to Russia or joining or training or anything like that.

Q. Well, was there a conversation concerning the training of anti-Castro troops or guerrillas to oppose Castro?

A. No, that must have been later, maybe when he came back some other time.

Q. Now were you present at all times while Oswald was there?

A. We got there before he did and we left at the same time he did.

Q. So, as far as you know, there wouldn't have been any opportunity for Oswald and Carlos to talk among themselves where you wouldn't have heard what they said?

A. That is right, because we were there all the

time.

Q. And you have no recollection that Oswald told Carlos that he wanted to help train anti-Castro guerrillas to fight against Castro?

A. None at all, none that I remember.

Q. All right. Now what was Oswald going to bring this Marine book back for?

A. Well, I guess to give to Carlos to help him out or something. First he was going to give it to me and Vance. I guess he wanted us to blow up the bridge or something. I don't know. We said no, and so he said, "O.K. I will give it to Carlos," you know, because after all Carlos -- I guess he could use it better than we could, you know, blow up bridges in Cuba or something, and I guess he was just going to give it to him so he could learn some stuff from it. I wouldn't know.

Q. Now when you left the store did you try to follow Oswald at all?

A. Well, we had some thought about it. When he left, he was going to go down -- he crossed Canal Street and he was -- he kept on going that way, I think on St. Charles or Claiborne -- way down there near the end -- which one is closer to the river? St. Charles?

Q. I am not familiar with New Orleans, so I get them mixed up.

A. It must have been St. Charles he went down, and Vance said, "Hey, let's follow him, see where he lives." He told us where he lived, but the way he told us the address --

Q. You don't know what it was?

A. When the F.B.I. man came by my house that day, he asked me, and I could just barely remember it. I remember it was to the left of Canal Street. It was Magazine Street.

Q. Magazine Street? what number? ~~yes~~

Q. Well, I remembered the number a little. I couldn't remember it altogether, but I remember --

Q. Do you remember that he had told you the number ~~anyway~~?

A. Yes, and I could -- I had a few -- I mean I had a little recollection about what it was, like it was a big number sort of like and had two zeros in it or something. I don't even remember. It seemed that his number did have that. We decided -- we thought maybe we can follow him for fun, but we decided no, we had better not, you know, because it was not good or anything, so we just went up Canal Street.

Q. Do you remember whether Oswald said anything about having been in Florida?

A. In Florida?

Q. Yes.

A. I am not too sure about that.

Q. You don't remember one way or the other

A. It must have been St. Charles he went down, and Vance said, "Hey, let's follow him, see where he lives." He told us where he lived, but the way he told us the address --

Q. You don't know what it was?

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Q. Magazine Street? what number?

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Q. Do you remember that he had told you the number?

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Q. Do you remember whether Oswald said anything about having been in Florida?

A. In Florida?

Q. Yes.

A. I am not too sure about that.

Q. You don't remember one way or the other

1 whether --

2 A. The only thing I remember about Florida is

3 when he asked was headquarters down there. He could have, but

4 I don't know.

5 Q. Now did you ever see Oswald after that?

6 A. No, that was the last time, first and last.

7 Q. How about Carlos? Did you see him after

8 that?

9 A. Yes. That time when we found out that it

10 was Oswald who killed him, well, then I went there, you know,

11 to get things straightened out and talk with Carlos a little

12 about him, you know.

13 Q. You went back and talked with Carlos, about

14 this meeting with Oswald, after the assassination? Is that

15 right?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Do you remember whether you saw Carlos

18 between the time that you met Oswald and the assassination?

19 A. Carlos?

20 Q. Yes.

21 A. Not that I remember.

22 Q. Can you tell us approximately when it was

23 that you met Oswald? Was it July or August?

24 A. Well, last time the F.B.I. man came, I

25 estimated around late July. I couldn't remember now, so I

will just stick with late July. That seems to stick pretty good. Vance said the same thing himself when the F.B.I. man questioned him, so I am pretty sure it was between late July -- middle July to late July.

Q. Did you form any opinion about Oswald when you met him?

A. When I met him?

Q. Yes. What did you think of him?

A. Well, when he went in there, I noticed he was a little nervous.

Q. How did he show his nervousness? Do you remember?

A. Well, the way he talked, you know. Well, you know, the way he talked I guess, kind of, you know, searching around for words and all that, and I remember he leaned on the table, and I remember reading once that, you know, if you exert some physical exertion, it kind of helps you tend to calm down or something like that. Anyway, I could tell by the way he was leaning on the table that maybe he was nervous.

Q. Other than this nervousness, did you form any other opinion about it?

A. Not particularly.

Q. Did he appear to be an intelligent person?

A. Intelligent person?

Q. Yes.

A. Sort of. He didn't appear stupid or anything like that. He seemed O.K., you know. He didn't seem like a Communist. Seemed like he just wanted to, you know, help out too, sort of.

Q. Did you subsequently learn that Oswald was arrested by the New Orleans Police Department for distributing Fair Play for Cuba Committee leaflets?

A. I didn't know that until after he killed Kennedy and it was in the papers.

Q. You didn't hear it?

A. On the radio?

Q. On the radio or television.

A. No.

Q. Now do you think you have told us everything that you can remember about this meeting you had with Oswald and Carlos? Is there anything else that you can think of?

A. No. There might be one thing. Carlos when he talked to me and Vance and my friend, Bill Dwyer, the first time, you know, he made speeches and all that. When he met him -- I don't know -- seemed like maybe he didn't want him or something. I am not too sure.

Q. Carlos didn't seem to open up to Oswald?

A. That is right. He opened up enough, you know, but he didn't give him any speeches or anything like

that.

Q. If you can think of anything else that occurred, we would like to have you tell us.

A. O.K.

Q. If you can't, I don't have any other questions.

A. He did seem like -- I guess he did seem like the type who was a little anti-social.

Q. He didn't seem to be too friendly?

A. No. He seemed friendly. I mean, he seemed friendly, you know, but he -- maybe like he didn't have enough experience with people, sort of. He seemed friendly though. That is one thing.

MR. LIEBELER: I don't have any other questions.

MRS. GERACI: Do you have a record of me reporting Carlos to the F.B.I.? Do you have that in the record anywhere where I found out -- he told me he was going to collect money for Cuba, but I didn't know he was giving out these little tickets as he called them, and then when I found out he had collected $10.00 and brought it down and I saw the receipts and he had more tickets, we forbade him to go down there, and Carlos called the house to try to get him a -- what is it?-- a license or permit to go from house to house and collect money.

THE WITNESS: He never called me.

MRS. GERACI: He did call me.

THE WITNESS: He called you? Carlos?

MRS. GERACI: I spoke with him on the phone.

THE WITNESS: That is because I told him -- when I collected, a man told me to do something like that, that I needed a license, so I went and told Carlos, "You have to get a license." He said, "Don't collect any more until I get one." Then he went to City Hall and got some stuff he had to fill out.

Q. This wasn't Oswald who told you you couldn't collect?

A. No.

Q. Oswald didn't have anything to do with this?

A. No. This was before I knew Oswald. This is a man works some place -- who works in a cleaner's I remember. I went there and he said I had to get a license to do that, so I called Carlos on the phone and told him.

MRS. GERACI: Then when Carlos called the house, I realized he was still involved in this.

THE WITNESS: I told you I was.

MRS. GERACI: I put my foot down and told him he couldn't do it any more, and I called the F.B.I.

THE WITNESS: And the Better Business Bureau.

MRS. GERACI: They told me to call the Better Business Bureau, but the man at the F.B.I. told me he couldn't

1 give out any information as to whether this was a Communist
2 organization or not, and the headquarters were in Miami, and
3 the best thing to do would be not to let him get involved in
4 it any more. Then I called the Better Business Bureau, and
5 they were supposed to check with Miami, but I never did get
6 a report back from him.
7 Q. Was this before or after you met Oswald?
8 A. This was before.
9 MRS. GERACI: But he has the receipt at home
10 with the date on it. When he gave Carlos money, Carlos gave
11 him a receipt.
12 THE WITNESS: I remember Carlos making out a
13 check to give the money to Miami too. When I gave him the
14 money, he put the money in his bank and made out a check to
15 the headquarters.
16 MRS. GERACI: We met Carlos just now in the hall,
17 and he told me the best thing Philip could do would be listen
18 to his parents and be a good student. Right now that would be
19 the way he could help combat Communism. And I told him I
20 thought he was too young to get involved in things like this,
21 selling tickets for Cuba and all this stuff. Last year he
22 was only 15 and too young to be involved in all that mess.
23 The man at the F.B.I. told me that an organization could be
24 all right today and next week it would be Communist controlled
25 and how was I to know.

MR. LIEBELER: Do you know who you talked to at the F.B.I.?

MRS. GERACI: Gee, I may have his name at home with these slips of paper that I took from him.

MR. LIEBELER: It is not really important. I just wondered if you remembered.

MRS. GERACI: Well, I wanted his name cleared for getting mixed up with Carlos, because I didn't know from beans about Carlos. He could be a Communist. I don't know who is and who isn't. When I found out he met Oswald, I nearly died. The week this happened he was camping with the Boy Scouts and gone Friday, Saturday, and Sunday when the stuff was on TV.

THE WITNESS: I was in school when he got shot.

MRS. GERACI: But you were in camp, but you didn't see a lot of the funeral and all that stuff showing Oswald's picture.

Q. How did you first become aware that Oswald was the fellow you met? Did Vance talk to you about it? Do you remember?

A. The first time was when the F.B.I. agent came to my house and asked did I see an ex-Marine and showed a picture and all that. I didn't even know it before that. It was just then that I realized.

Q. Did the F.B.I. man tell you how he --

A. Got my name?

Q. What prompted him, why he came to your house. Did he tell you?

A. Well, he said he couldn't tell me that. I asked him, and he said, well, he couldn't tell me. Of course, I guess it might have been because we -- my mother called, you know, about this Cuban business -- they got my name on their list or something, I guess, and when they found out that he tried to join that group, that must have been where it came from. That is what I think.

MRS. GERACI: They probably had a list of people who were collecting money for the organization.

MR. LIEBELER: O.K. I don't have any more questions. I do want to thank you very much for coming in and being as cooperative as you have, and, on behalf of the Commission, I want to thank you very much.

THE WITNESS: O.K.

MRS. GERACI: You are welcome, so long as we don't have any publicity.

MR. LIEBELER: That is something you never can guarantee. ~~but it won't be my fault if you do.~~

....Thereupon, the taking of the witness's testimony was concluded....

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Helen R. Dietrich, do hereby certify that the above and foregoing (24 pages of typewritten matter) is a true and correct transcription of the stenographic (Stenotype) notes of the testimony of PHILIP GERACI, III, taken down by me, and transcribed under my supervision, on the 7th day of April, 1964, in New Orleans, Louisiana, in proceedings before the President's Commission investigating the assassination of President Kennedy.

Helen R. Dietrich
Reporter

* * * *

I have read the foregoing, pages 1 through 25, on this 26th day of May, 1964, and it is true and correct.

Philip Geraci III
Philip Geraci III